

F.HUGH VALLANCEY AND THE EARLY SLOPER RECORDS

By DAVE HILL

To the newcomer it would seem that, with the sudden appearance of so much information from Sloper records, there would be nothing left to discover. Unfortunately from what follows it is probable that we will never know everything. This is disappointing to the tidy-minded amongst us; in fact some foreign perfin collectors will be surprised at both the extent of our knowledge and our ignorance of British perfins. With over 22,000 different perfin dies on GB stamps, there is much to know and therefore much we will probably never know. (Compare this with 1,000 dies known on Dutch stamps.)

So when I rediscovered a photocopied copy of the second edition of Vallancey's book "British Stamps Perforated with Firms Initials", I was not surprised at our relative ignorance even now of the record of possibly the first collector of British perfins and the first to get to see Sloper's records. Vallancey wrote his book shortly before the last war and made minor revisions to the second edition, printed in 1948, as the remaining copies of the original had been destroyed in the Blitz. A first edition was included in Auction 7 (1996) - price realised - £7-50p.

Vallancey gives most of the documents used by Sloper's themselves in their "History - - Through Five Reigns", produced immediately before the war, but gives much more information for the collector starting under the heading "Very Early Records". I do not think we have the actual records which Vallancey saw. Judge for yourself the extent of our knowledge;

The first entry is for perfins for "Mr T J Allman, publisher of Oxford Street (TJA)." Presumably the letters in brackets are those of the die but this arrangement of letters is not known although a die TJA/463 is. (T2570.01)

We do not list this identity (yet) but back in 1980 Mike Burrows listed Thomas J Allman at 463 Oxford Street, London W, in an article on full name dies (Bulletin 186). Mike wrote some very readable articles in the Bulletin in those days.

The second entry is for J.C. Bailey & Co of Tower Hill (JCB&C^o). Again this letter combination is not known and the earliest used similar die is JCB (J1310.05). The user is not identified.

The third entry is for Baker, Baker & Co of Bristol (BB&Co). This is B0620.03 and is known used by this firm. It is known to be one of the longest used dies - Queen Victoria to George VI.

Vallancey could not reproduce the record complete so there are gaps.

Entry nine was the first full name die, for CORY. Perhaps this was C5626.01, CORY/C, as this is the earliest CORY die we have identified.

Entry ten was for Crosse and Blackwell (C&B SOHO). This would be either C0960.01 or C0690.04 - C&B/SOHO.

Eleven was another full name, CRAMER, the piano makers. These are known to have used C6450.01 - CRAMER.

Twenty was Copestake, Moore, Crampton & Co (SC. The New Illustrated catalogue notes that this was one of the dies which Sloper used to show the Post Office his idea of perfins, and it is not known postally used.

Obviously the orders did not come to Sloper in alphabetical order; they were arranged like this sometime later.

Twenty nine was for Hambro Son & Co, the bankers, (CIH&S). This would be C3730.02 or C3730.03.

The last one Vallancey lists is eighty nine, for Frederick Huth. This is the full name HUTH (H7490.01).

Vallancey then gives the names of firms who had been Sloper clients for many years, therefore we know these were Sloper dies. Hitchcock Williams & Co; their early die is not known.

Ind Coope & Co; possibly 10370.01.

I & R Morley; either I2170.04aM or I2170.04bM.

C Tennant Sons & Co; which is C7760.01.

J&J Adam; which is the full name ADAM - A1650.01.

Great Western Railway; which is G4350.01 and G4390.02 - GR/W.

Vallancey then lists the following under "Interesting Specimens". I'm sure these are also Sloper dies, certainly the first one is.

Sloper themselves used the monogram J&S. In fact they copied the Romans and used I instead of J.

Anchor design. Vallancey confirms that Clark & Co, Anchor Thread

Works, Paisley used this design both without CC (Design 0935.01) and with the initials CC (C1840.02).

Fancy M followed by the word Bros; used by Mander Brothers of Wolverhampton. This would be either M0730.01 or M0730.01a.

Large fancy G enclosing de; used by A de Gruchy & Sons of Jersey. This is G1390.01, another die used from Victorian times until the reign of Elizabeth.

E of D was for the Earl of Dudley; this is E3350.02.

Three small holes across the stamp; supplied to Feltoe & Son of Abermarle Street. This is Design 0630.01.

There is one reference to a perfin for foreign stamps - LD in a Square, for Dreyfus & Co, Port Elizabeth. Is this die known?

A number of paragraphs are devoted to the perfin "EU'P'N MAIL" of The European Mail. This was one of the publications of Morgan Bros Ltd of Essex Street, London. This gave market prices but the advent of the telegraph system killed the paper. This is perfin E4920.01 or E4920.02.

Vallancey mentions a Dr. Percy Kendall who had a large collection of perfins. It is a name I have never come across before.

Vallancey finishes with lists of earliest known plate numbers on the 1d red with perfin. These would have been produced by Sloper as their exclusive patent had not yet expired and they had no competitors. We now know that the plates were not used in order, so the earliest plate number recorded on a 1d red is academic.

Amongst this list he attributes the full name NICHOLSON to Nicholson, St Pauls Churchyard; (N1785.01) but unconfirmed as yet.

We seem to have "lost" a number of perfins. Both Vallancey and Jennings refer to full name perfins WILKS/BROS and NIGHT/MAIL, not at present included in our catalogues. In Bulletin 32 (May 1962) I find that C Jennings, our first president, had 2 examples of WILKS/BROS on 1d plates, and refers to NIGHT/MAIL as being used by Morgans. If you have these perfins please give details to Roy: they can then be added to the catalogues.

So, of 23 Sloper dies referred to by Vallancey, 4 have still not been confirmed and many others we are unsure about some 63 years later. Evidently it is not as easy as at first you might think.